(e) During the 9th Plan period, 168 Ground Line Kilometres (GLK) of 2D and 768 GLK of 3D seismic data acquisition were envisaged in West Bengal. As on 1.10.99, 417 GLK of 2D and 2062 GLK of 3D seismic data have already been acquired. The interesting sand encountered in Ichapur-I was retested in a side tracked well.

ONGC's future oil exploration programme in West Bengal involves interpretation and integration of acquired 2D and 3D seismic and other geo-scientific data, for allowing up the leads and generation of commercially viable drilling prospects, if any.

CBM Exploration in Raniganj, West Bengal

1651. SHRI NILOTPAL BASU:
SHRI DIPANKAR MUKHERJEE:

Will the Minister of PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS be pleased to refer to answer to Unstarred Question 1982 given in the Rajya Sabha on 16th December, 1998 and state:

(a) whether Petroleum Exploration Licence (PEL) has been granted for CBM exploration in Raniganj area of West Bengal;

(b) if so, whether the CBM exploration has been commenced as stated in the aforesaid reply; and

(c) if not, the reason therefor and the details plan of activities for drilling alongwith time schedule in the area?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS (SHRI E. PONNUSWAMY): (a) to (c) Yes, Sir. Oil and Natural Gas Corporation Ltd. has taken up Coal Bed Methane (CBM) exploration as a Research and Development (R&D) project. Preliminary geological field investigations and analysis have been undertaken. Further activities would be dependant on the results thereof.

Pricing of GAIL GDRs

1652. SHRI DIPANKAR MUKHERJEE: SHRI
NILOTPAL BASU:

Will the Minister of PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government's attention has been drawn to the news-item captioned "Chidambaram question pricing of GAIL GDRs" which appeared in Economic Times dated the 9th November, 1999; and

(b) if so. Government's reaction thereto?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS (SHRI E. PONNUSWAMY): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) In 1997, the Book Building process was followed to ascertain the share price of GAIL in GDR market. There were no quotes for the price of Rs. 115/- per share. However, price of Rs. 116/- per share was quoted by the bidders for demand of about 4.8 crore shares only. As GDR issue was launched with a mandate to sell upto 20 crore shares at a minimum price of Rs. 125/- per share, the issue was withdrawn, inter alia, on account of extremely low demand even at the price below the minimum approved price.

As the price of shares often fluctuate, there can be no linkage between price quoted by the bidders, two years ago, in 1997 and the market driven price asertained in 1999.

About 13.5 crore shares of face value of Rs. 10 per share of GAIL held by Government have now been sold in the GDR market, at a market driven price of Rs. 70 per share, which emerged from "Book Building" exercise.

Guidelines for regularising contract employees in PSUs

1653. SHRI GOPALSINH G. SOLANKI: Will the Minister of PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS be pleased to state:

(a) the guidelines being followed by his Ministry in the matter of regularisation of services of "contract employees" in various Public Sector Undertakings (PSUs);

(b) whether it is a fact that a large number of "contract employees" in various PSUs in his Ministry are awaiting permanent absorption on regular basis; and

(c) if so, details thereof with the number of such employees appointed and regularised during the past five years; year-wise and in all the PSUs?